

FAMILY GUIDE

MARINE CORPS RECRUIT DEPOT PARRIS ISLAND SC



RECRUIT TRAINING

Most of us read anything we can find about recruit training, the Corps, and what our recruits will be enduring at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island.

The following are some tips and information that will help you adjust, and will guide you through life as a parent of a future Marine

The day your son or daughter leaves for recruit training, they will be officially sworn in and sign on the “dotted line”. Family is allowed to attend and take pictures or record the ceremony. This is a life changing event, so take lots of pictures.

They will then report to the airport and board a plane to Savannah/Hilton head International Airport. They will only be allowed to take an address book, photos, religious items and the clothes on their back. No watches, books, food or makeup.

They will not arrive at MCRD Parris Island, S.C., until late that night, where they will begin “in-processing”. They will not sleep for the next 36 hours.

Do whatever you need to do to keep your sanity, EXCEPT:

- Worry. Your son/daughter will be very well cared for and will receive the best training possible.
- Call or write the Drill Instructors
- Park your self in front of the mailbox – it will be an effort in futility. Evenings and Sundays are typically when recruits may have a few moments to write home.
- Be afraid to leave the phone for fear you’ll miss “The Call”. Phone calls don’t happen often.
- Go out and buy lots of comfort items, toiletries, and clothing. It will be disposed of or inventoried for storage within the first two hours of arrival. The Marine Corps will supply them with everything they need.



All new male recruits will receive a haircut soon after arrival at MCRD Parris Island.

Now, here are some positive things you CAN do:

- Before your recruit leaves for recruit training, make an address book with important names, addresses and phone numbers. This list should include doctors and dentists in case medical information is required.
- You may consider sending them off with a farewell letter to read on the plane about how much you love him/her and how proud you are. Tell them that it took *Honor* and *Courage* to join the Marine Corps, that it will take *Commitment* from both of you to make it through, and that you’ll be there for them every step of the way.
- Include a family picture they can put up in their footlocker.



New recruits notify home of their arrival.

DESCRIPTION OF RECRUIT TRAINING

“We Make Marines.” Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, S.C., is the birthplace of basically trained Marines. We believe that Marines are forged in a furnace of shared hardship and tough training. This intense experience creates bonds of camaraderie, esprit de corps, and standards of conduct so strong that Marines will let nothing stand in the way of accomplishing their mission. Marine Corps recruits are trained and challenged not only physically and mentally, but morally as well. These three challenges, when combined, forge the bedrock of the character of a Marine.

It has been said time and time again by former Marines that Marine Corps recruit training was the most difficult thing they ever had to do in their entire lives. In order to train the world’s most elite fighting force, it has to be both tough, and structured, and neither aspect has changed much over time.

Processing

The first week is called “Processing,” and the objective is to start the paperwork to enter them into the Marine Corps’ pay and records system, and begin the medical and dental in-processing of each recruit. They will also be given a basic uniform issue along with their service rifles and field gear. Most of their initial issue items, along with a basic understanding of military procedures, will be dolled out in the first week of recruit training.

You should receive a post card from your recruits with his/her mailing address, which will be sent out within the first 3-5 days after they report to MCRD Parris Island.



“Mail received, Aye Sir!” This recruit is in high spirits after receiving a letter during mail call.

Your mission, from the day the plane pulls out for Parris Island until the week of graduation is to **WRITE LETTERS!** It makes no difference what’s in them, as long as they arrive.

Talk about the weather, current events, philosophy of life, books, “when I was your age” kind of stuff. Remind them that they have chosen an honorable path, that you respect their courage, and that they should stay committed to their goal of becoming a Marine. These words will echo what they are learning during their training about the Corps’ core values: **Honor, Courage, and Commitment**. Please refrain from writing any unnecessary negativity in letters as it could distract them from training.

The first three weeks at recruit training tend to be the hardest and it will reflect in their letters.

If you receive a questionable letter from your recruit, take it to a recruiter or any other Marine and read it together. They might be able to shed some light on what is happening with your recruit. Be patient, encourage them and let them know how proud you are of them.

As time goes by the letters will become more positive and more motivating. After a while you will receive the “I can do this” letters. Your recruit will start to tell you about his/her training and you will start to share in the pride that they are experiencing as they progress towards graduation and earning the title “Marine.”

Receiving

Receiving is where new recruits arrive and spend the first days of their recruit training experience. Here they receive their first haircut and initial gear issue, including uniforms, toiletries and letter writing supplies. During this time, recruits are given full medical and dental screenings, and take the Initial Strength Test (IST).



New recruits experience the initial strength test.

Forming

Forming begins after the IST when recruits are “dropped” to their training companies and they “meet” their drill instructors for the first time at Pick-up. During Forming’s 3-4 day span, recruits learn the basics of how to march, how to wear their uniform, and how to secure their weapon.



See the Interactive Training Matrix
www.mcrdpi.usmc.mil/training/matrix

The Training Cycle

Recruit training is divided into three phases and is broken down by Training Day (TD). Each phase builds upon the other, reinforces those skills and values necessary to become a Marine, and provides goals for the recruits.

- First Phase (TD 1 – 24) is the beginning, where the foundation and reinforcement of Core Values and ethics starts, and where recruits begin Combat Conditioning and learning about the Marine Corps in classes on General Military Subjects, Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP), and Combat Water Survival.
- Second Phase (TD 25 – 47) is where Core Values and ethics are reinforced, and the fundamentals of Marksmanship are taught and tested.
- Third Phase (TD 48 – 70) begins the evaluation process. Recruits receive additional training in Marksmanship and Basic Warrior Training, are tested academically and physically, face the defining evaluation of the Crucible’s test of mental, moral, and physical challenges, and then transition from recruit to Basic Marine during the week leading up to graduation.

Core Values

Honor, Courage and Commitment. These are the Marine Corps’ Core Values. Combined with training on ethics and leadership traits, they are incorporated into every aspect of recruit training, resulting in Marines who are committed to our core values in service to their country. These values make up the bedrock of a Marine’s character. During recruit training recruits learn to embrace these values, learn how to know right from wrong, and develop leadership traits like integrity, discipline, teamwork, duty, and Esprit De Corps. Senior Drill Instructors also conduct guided discussions with recruits after training events to reinforce these values.

Combat Conditioning

Combat Conditioning, builds a strong foundation in general fitness by increasing core strength and upper body development through power movements and events like the obstacle and confidence Course, MCMAP, and conditioning hikes.

Confidence Course

The Confidence Course is an 11-station obstacle course that helps recruits build confidence as well as upper-body strength.



Recruits engage in physical training during the Confidence Course.

Drill

Drill is the basic way in which platoons march and move from place to place and is one way that recruits learn discipline and teamwork. At first, recruits practice staying in step with the rest of the platoon and the drill instructor. However, as training continues, the platoon becomes a well-oiled machine performing synchronous, complex drill movements.

Marine Corps Martial Arts Program

The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program, or MCMAP, is a martial art that was designed to be, and is the “synergy of mental, character, and physical disciplines.” Recruits are introduced to the fundamentals of MCMAP on training day one and progress towards the final test to earn their Tan Belt.



Recruits are continually learning Marine Corps Martial Arts Program techniques.

Academic Training

Recruits exercise their minds through academic training and subjects ranging from Marine Corps history, Policy and regulations, Marine customs and courtesies, to basic lifesaving procedures.

Combat Water Survival

Combat Water Survival develops confidence in the water. All recruits must pass the minimum requirement level of Combat Water Survival-4, which requires recruits to perform a variety of techniques. If a recruit meets the CWS-4 requirements, they may upgrade to a higher level.

Marksmanship Training

Marksmanship training teaches recruits the fundamentals of marksmanship with the M-16A2 service rifle. This training lasts two weeks, the first of which is called Grass Week. During this week, recruits are taught four shooting positions by a Combat Marksmanship Instructor (CMI).



A recruit fires the M16A2 service rifle.



Recruit receives additional instruction from a Combat Marksmanship Instructor

The CMI shows recruits how to fire, adjust their sights, take into account the effect of the weather, etc. During the second week of marksmanship training, recruits fire the known-distance course called Table 1, with ranges of 200, 300 and 500 yards.

Evaluation

Recruits are evaluated daily by their drill instructors for their performance and how well they are developing an understanding and personal ownership of Core Values and ethics. They also must also pass the seven graduation requirements. In addition to the MCMAP Tan Belt test, Combat Water Survival, and Marksmanship, they are also tested in their academic knowledge and practical application of General Military Subjects, and physical fitness. The Crucible and Battalion Commander's Inspection are the final two requirements that all recruits must pass to become a Marine.

Recruits also receive Basic Warrior Training, such as tactical movement, hand and arm signals, and Land Navigation, and they are given additional combat marksmanship training during the Table 2 course of fire.

The Crucible

The Crucible is the defining moment of recruit training. It is designed to evaluate a recruit's mental, moral, and physical development in order to validate the transformation into a United States Marine.

For most, the Crucible will be the first time they reach the limits of their mental, physical, and emotional endurance. If they pass, they will know that they are capable of much more than they previously believed.



Recruits surmount many obstacles during the 54-hour rite of passage known as the Crucible.

The Crucible consists of 54 hours of intense, physically demanding training, under conditions of sleep and food deprivation. During this time, recruits will be forged in the furnace of shared hardship and tough training that is the time-tried and battle-proven trademark of Marine recruit training.

There will be night forced marches, a tough night infiltration movement, a combat resupply event, a casualty evacuation drill, and combat field firing. Any recruit who quits will not bear the title Marine.

At the very center of the Crucible's evaluation are Core Values events, and each recruit is evaluated by how well they have embraced the values necessary to be called Marine.

Capping the already tough challenges of the previous two days is a 9 mile march with full packs and all of their personal equipment. It is the final event designed to see who has what it takes, and all recruits must complete the march to pass, and those that do not are sent home.



Tired and emotionally drained, recruits continue persevere through the Crucible.

At the end of the march the recruits participate in the Emblem Ceremony. This is the moment when the legacy is handed down, they earn the title “Marine,” and the newest Marines are presented with the Corps’ emblem, the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor, by their drill instructors.



The Eagle, Globe and Anchor is a distinction that is “Earned... Never Given”.

Marine Week

The last week of training is filled with final requirements such as the practical examination, physical fitness test, battalion commander’s inspection and final drill. This is also the period in which the new Marines begin to transition from recruit to Marine. The culmination of this is the presentation of the eagle, globe and anchor, signifying the new Marine’s successful completion of recruit training.

Family Day & Graduation

Family Day and Graduation take place on the last two days of Recruit Training. Family Day occurs Thursday and gives new Marines a chance to see family and friends for the first time during on-base liberty. Graduation is conducted Friday in a formal ceremony and parade, attended by family and friends.

As the days draw nearer to graduation, you will once again face the prospect of being reunited with your new Marine. Over the last three months your Marine has already hiked 90 miles, ran 75 miles and fired 650 rounds with the M16A2 service rifle, and he/she will be a highly motivated, well disciplined and smartly trained individual ready and eager to take on the next challenge.



FAMILY DAY

Thursday

7 a.m. MOT Run – A four mile motivational run where the new Marines run in company formation from training battalion to training battalion singing cadence and ringing each battalion's bell signifying their eminent departure from the Depot. The ringing of the bells is an old naval tradition stemming from the ringing of the ships bell signifying each hour a sailor was on watch.

9:30 a.m. Family Day –

Family Day begins with a briefing about recruit training given by the Recruit Training Battalion Commanding Officer. At **10:00 a.m.**, there is a brief ceremony where the new Marines march in, and at the conclusion of the ceremony the new Marines will be granted on-base liberty (free time) until 3 p.m. This is the time where your new Marine will be able share their experiences at recruit training. Depot bus tours are also available on a first-come, first-served basis. Check with the visitor's center for tour times. Please ensure that your Marine is back at the All Weather Training Facility by 2:45 p.m. so he/she is on time for the accountability formation.

GRADUATION

Friday:

7:45 a.m. Morning Colors

Ceremony – Depot Headquarters, Bldg 154. A time honored tradition featuring the Parris Island Marine Band playing the National Anthem and other patriotic selections as the Nation's colors are raised over Parris Island.

10:00 a.m. Graduation – The final ceremony establishing your Marines as the newest members of, "The Few and the Proud" is normally held Friday mornings on the Depot's Peatross Parade Deck and lasts about 1 hour. In the event of inclement weather, graduation ceremonies will be held in the All Weather Training Facility. Changes to locations and/or times will be announced on the morning of graduation at the Visitors Center, earlier if possible. Updates are also available on the following phone numbers: **1-800-826-7503** or **843-228-3650**.

New Marines will go on their post graduation leave immediately after graduation.

Notice to families of graduating Marines:

In order to be authorized access to the Depot, guests of Family Day and Graduation must have entry/parking placards (base passes) to properly identify their vehicles. Placards (base passes) are sent by the recruits to guests and family by mail. Additionally placards (base passes) will be made available at the front gate.

Vehicle operators must possess:

- A valid driver's license
- Vehicle registration
- Proof of automobile insurance.

Vehicle operators failing to present these items will be denied entry to the Depot.

All vehicles coming aboard the Depot are subject to search by the military police.

Persons other than the invited guests of the graduating Marines who use, or attempt to use, the Battalion Commander's Graduation Invitation letter or who make unauthorized reproductions of it to gain entry to the Depot will be guilty of trespassing aboard a military installation.

Visitors are requested to stop by the Douglas Visitor Center upon arrival to check in. In order to allow time to identify which Marines have family or visitors waiting to see them, please sign in before 9:00 a.m. on Family Day.

Use of cellular phones and video cameras while operating a motor vehicle aboard the Depot is strictly prohibited.

Event Update Information

For up to date information on events and changes to event times, **especially during cold or inclement weather**, please refer to the MCRD Parris Island Web site at:

www.mcrdpi.usmc.mil

For more information, call:

1-800-826-7503 or 843- 228-3650

Visiting Parris Island

As your Marine is ready, so in turn should you be. Here is some additional information, a list of contacts, and possible items that will need to be addressed prior to stepping off for Parris Island.

How to get to Parris Island

Driving from the North

Take I-95 until you reach South Carolina Exit 33. This will take you to Route 21 South toward Beaufort and continue to Route 280 (you will pass the Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort along the way). Take a right turn onto 280 shortly after passing the Marine Corps Air Station and continue traveling for approximately 6 miles. Route 280 eventually turns into Route 802. You will see a sign for Parris Island. The off-ramp to Parris Island is on the right side of the road and it will take you to the front gate.

Driving from the South

(Savannah, Ga): From I-95, merge onto US-278 E via exit 8; travel toward SUN CITY/BLUFFTON/ BEAUFORT/HILTON HEAD IS. (approx. 5 miles). Turn LEFT onto SC-141. (almost 4 miles). Turn LEFT onto SC-170 N/OKATIE HWY. (not even a mile away). Turn RIGHT onto SC-170/OKATIE HWY. Continue to follow SC-170 N. (about 10 miles) Turn RIGHT on SAVANNAH HWY/SC-802 (this turn is tricky to spot and is the first right after the bridge). Continue to follow SC-802, bearing to the right. (about 4 miles) You will see the off-ramp for Parris Island on your right-hand side and it will take you to the front gate.

Airports

The nearest major airport to Parris Island is the Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport.

The next closest airports are the Hilton Head Airport and the Charleston International Airport.

Transportation from these airports is not provided; both airports have rental car agencies.

Accommodations

Off base accommodations can be found by starting at the Beaufort Chamber of Commerce Web site www.beaufortsc.org. (Look under the visitors tab and then lodging.) For those who are flying please use these codes as a reference to ensure that you will be coming into the correct airport.

- The Savannah/HiltonHead Int'l (SAV)
- Hilton Head Airport (HHH)
- Charleston International Airport (CHS).

For those driving please use Parris Island's zip code (29905) to reference any travel plans or mapping. For further travel information, please refer to the official Parris Island website at: www.mcrdpi.usmc.mil/visitors

On base accommodations can be found at the Osprey Inn at 843-228-2744, which is conveniently located on Parris Island.

Please note that the Inn fills up quickly and only accepts reservations 15 days prior to actual graduation date.

SUGGESTED READING LIST

Into the Crucible

by James B. Woulfe

Semper Fi

Edited by Clint Willis (short stories of Marines from boot camp to battle).

Warrior Culture of the U.S. Marines

by Marion F. Sturkey.

Flags of our Fathers

by James Bradley.

Making the Corps

by Thomas E. Ricks (good insight into what motivates DI's and recruits).

Keeping Faith

by John Schaeffer and Frank Schaeffer

The Greatest U. S. Marine Corps Stories

Ever Told : Unforgettable Stories of Courage, Honor, and Sacrifice

by Iain C. Martin (Editor)

Emergencies

If a message is required to notify a recruit of an emergency situation at any time during recruit training, **please contact your local Red Cross** to have an official message sent to MCRD Parris Island, S.C. In order to process the message quickly, please provide the recruit's name, social security number, company and platoon.

Boot Camp Do's and Do Not's

Do – Send letters every day. Mail is such an important lifeline to recruits.

Do – Keep letters upbeat when you write and encourage them.

Do – Remind them about *Honor, Courage, and Commitment*, and tell them what these values mean to you. Hearing these words from you will help to reinforce what they are learning during their training, and will let them know that what they are doing is right.

Do – Send pictures **ONLY** if they request them. Remember, everyone will see them.

Do – Encourage others to send letters.

Do – Keep friends and family members updated on your recruit's progress.

Do – Remember the training your recruit is going through is challenging and will prepare him/her for combat related situations as a Marine.

Do – Research your trip to Parris Island. There is plenty of useful advice available through online support groups and Web sites that will make the days go by smoothly.

Do Not – Miss family day or Graduation. It will be one of the proudest moments of your life.

Do not – Send items to your recruit unless asked for. It is parental nature to want to send something...Fight it...Don't.

Do not – Contact his/her commanding officers of any rank directly. If you have questions or concerns, contact the recruiter first.

Do not – Write on the outside of the envelope or put stickers or kiss marks.

Do not – Put Marine, PVT, or PFC on the address to your recruit. They are recruits until they graduate recruit training.